

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 SY-05 EB-08 COME-00 HA-05
A-01 AID-05 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4073

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0206

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, AR
SUBJECT: TERRORISM

REF: (A) 77 BUENOS AIRES A-151, (B) 77 BUENOS AIRES 9764,
(C) STATE 001340

1. OVER THE PAST YEAR THE SECURITY SITUATION IN ARGENTINA HAS GREATLY IMPROVED. THE BEST AVAILABLE ESTIMATES OF TERRORIST STRENGTH REFLECT 400-500 MONTONEROS, 700-100 ERP AND LESS THAN 20 WORKERS POWER COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION (OCPO). THE LEADERSHIP OF BOTH THE MONTONEROS AND THE ERP IS OPERATING OUT OF EUROPE AND THE ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN DISARRAY. THE OCPO HAS NOT RECENTLY ENGAGED IN TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AND FOR THE MOST PART THEY ARE IN DEEP HIDING. RECENTLY A CACHE OF ARMS WAS DISCOVERED IN MAR DEL PLATA BELONGING TO THE PCML (MARXIST LENINIST COMMUNIST PARTY). HOWEVER, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN SIGNIFICANT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES FOR OVER 1 1/2 YEARS.

2. THE MONTONEROS REPRESENT THE MAJOR TERRORIST THREAT. THEY ARE OPERATING PRINCIPALLY IN THE SOUTHERN AREA OF GREATER BUENOS AIRES WHICH INCLUDES THE MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AREA. THEY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FORGE AN IDENTIFICATION WITH DISSATISFIED WORKERS AND TO CAPITALIZE ON THE HARSH

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ECONOMIC SITUATION. THEY HAVE THREATENED BUSINESS EXECUTIVES WHOSE COMPANIES HAVE BECOME INVOLVED IN LABOR DISPUTES OR WHO HAVE LAID OFF WORKERS. THIS ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY STRONGLY WITH WORKERS' ASPIRATIONS THROUGH ATTACKS AGAINST MANAGEMENT IS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE THEIR MAIN GOAL DURING THIS COMING YEAR.

3. THE MAJOR LIMITATION ON MONTONERO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES
RESULTS FROM THEIR DEPLETED RESOURCES.

THEY HAVE SUFFERED MAJOR DEFECTS, IN SOME CASES OF HIGH RANKING PERSONNEL. MANY OF THESE DEFECTORS ARE COLLABORATING WITH ARGENTINE SECURITY OFFICIALS, MAKING IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE MONTONEROS TO SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCT OPERATIONS. THE STRONGEST AND LARGEST MONTONERO COLUMN IS COLUMN 25 WHICH IS OPERATING IN THE SOUTHERN AREA OF GREATER BUENOS AIRES. IT HAS 60 TO 80 MEMBERS. THIS COLUMN RECEIVED A SERIOUS SETBACK ON DEC. 14, 1977 WHEN ITS LEADER (RAUL MORTOLA) WAS KILLED IN A CONFRONTATION WITH SECURITY FORCES. HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF GENERAL OMAR ACTIS IN 1976, COL. ANGEL SURADA IN MAY 1977, OR RODOLFO IARCIE, MANAGER OF ALGODONERA LAVALLOL, AND, ON OCT. 13, 1977, HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANTING A BOMB IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE OF MR. BEECH, MANAGER OF CHRYSLER. THIS SETBACK HAS TEMPORARILY REDUCED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SOUTHERN COLUMN WHICH HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR NUMEROUS ATTACKS AGAINST BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL.

4. THE EMBASSY'S OVERALL ASSESSMENT IS THAT ARGENTINA IS SAFE FOR U.S. TOURIST TRAVEL AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS COMING ON PRIVATE VISITS. THE SECURITY SITUATION HAS IMPROVED FOR AMERICAN BUSINESS PERSONNEL AND THEY SHOULD FEEL FREE TO TRAVEL TO ARGENTINA WITH THE CAVEAT

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THAT THEY FOLLOW GOOD SECURITY PRACTICES, AVOID PUBLICITY AND THAT THEIR COMPANIES ARE NOT INVOLVED IN ANY SERIOUS LABOR DISPUTES. ALL U.S. BUSINESS EXECUTIVES VISITING ARGENTINA SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO MEET WITH THE EMBASSY SECURITY OFFICER TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC SECURITY SAFEGUARDS TO BE FOLLOWED WHILE IN ARGENTINA.

5. THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN EXECUTIVES OF U.S. FIRMS PRESENTLY BASED IN ARGENTINA IS APPROXIMATELY 55.

CASTRO

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